

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team  
May 9-10, 2002 -- Sheboygan**

**Draft Notes**

These notes summarize LMFT decisions and recommendations, but are not intended as a summary of all discussions.

**Present:** Tom Hansen, Mike Toney, John Kubisiak, Justine Hasz, Matt Coffaro, Dick Rebicek, Pradeep Hirethota, Sue Marcquenski, Paul Peeters, Lee Meyers, Terry Lychwick, Andy Fayram, Steve Hogler, George Boronow, Bill Horns

**Next meeting:** July 18-19, 2002 – Sturgeon Bay Service Center

**Zone 3 whitefish trap net season.**

Background. A draft rule pertaining to the Zone 3 whitefish trap net season and trap net-marking has been developed. The rule is intended to open up the closed season for whitefish trap netting south of 44°55'50" during the summer months from June 29 through Labor Day. The opening of zone 3 for whitefish trap netting during this period would be allowed under the following conditions: 1) nets could not be set in waters deeper than 150 feet, 2) nets could not be set in the area between Two Rivers and Manitowoc, and 3) only 6 trap nets per licensed commercial fisher could be used. In addition, the rule would create lake-wide enhanced trap net marking requirements.  
Action. The LMFT recommend the rule as drafted.

**Lake Michigan Integrated Fisheries Management Plan.**

Background. A draft Plan is available and will be e-mailed to all team members.  
Action. The LMFT reviewed and revised the draft plan. After some editing by Bill Horns, the draft will be made available to the Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum and other interested groups and individuals.

**Feral broodstock management updates and research/assessment planning.**

Background. I would like to have a discussion of feral brood stock management issues, including the following specific topics: a) Sue M's research proposal, b) steelhead runs and hatchery holdings, and c) stocking location in the Kewaunee River.  
Action. The LMFT discussed the question of how to improve returns of steelhead, coho, and brown trout to brood rivers. A number of possible factors were discussed, including stream flow rates, times and places of stocking, condition of fish at the time of stocking, predator/competitor abundance in streams, genetic selection in the propagation process, and in-lake harvests. Andy Fayram was asked to head-up the development of a research strategy to address the problem. The Team asked Andy to take the following approach: 1) Review and summarize existing data from diverse

sources (weir reports, creel reports, and other sources inside and outside Wisconsin). 2) Interact extensively with field biologists at all steps in the process. 3) Develop a list of research, management, and/or assessment projects for consideration. 4) Develop a long-term dynamic strategy for tackling the possible projects.

### **Menominee River walleye.**

Background. Justine has had conversations with Michigan regarding possible regulation changes for the spring walleye fishery on the Menominee River.

Action. Justine will develop a rule proposal for LMFT review.

### **Sucker removal from tributaries.**

Background. Justine has received a request for a rough fish removal contract to remove one million pounds of suckers from the Oconto. She has asked for a discussion of how to handle this type of request. This is a separate issue from the cooperative agreements for the collection of sucker eggs.

Action. The issue was discussed at some length. It was agreed that rough fish removal contracts of that magnitude are not needed. No specific recommendations were made.

### **White perch management in Green Bay.**

Background. Preliminary data indicate that white perch from Green Bay have significantly lower PCB levels than a few years ago. None of 68 white perch tested this winter had PCB levels in skin-on fillets that exceeded 2 ppm. This has raised the possibility of taking steps to facilitate an increased commercial harvest of white perch. I have been asked to discuss possible management actions at the third Green Bay yellow perch workshop. Related to this is the possibility of using Lampara seines to harvest the white perch. Lampara seines may allow the release alive of any incidentally caught yellow perch.

Action. The issue was discussed at some length. Questions raised included the following: 1) In light of the fact that PCB levels in white perch may rise again if abundance declines and growth rates increase, who is responsible for monitoring future trends in PCBs? 2) It was agreed that the effectiveness of gears such as the lampara seine and larger-mesh gillnets should be tested. What is their effectiveness at catching white perch while minimizing bycatch of other species? 3) If the harvest of white perch is facilitated by contract or rule, what restrictions should be put in place – mesh limits in gill nets? depth limits?, effort limits?

### **Smelt**

Background. The WF/GLSFC has asked the Department to a) conduct a “Benthic Life Study” to assess the impact of trawling on benthos and b) to close trawling on Green Bay and Lake Michigan. At the spring hearings, a Conservation Congress

advisory question calling for the closure of trawling in Green Bay was strongly supported.

Action. The Team recognizes that we do not know the effect of trawling on benthic organisms. The Team does not believe that commercial harvests have been the cause of the smelt decline and believes that predation by stocked salmon and trout is a more likely cause, but acknowledges that incidental catch in the smelt fishery is a concern. Noting the public concern about the effect of trawling and recognizing the decisive vote at the spring hearings, the Team will consider recommending a rule proposal to close trawling in Green Bay, but allow continued trawling in Lake Michigan. The question will be put to the LMFT's Policy Committee in the next few weeks. The Team agreed that if this is recommended by the Policy Committee, the rule change proposal should be packaged with the trap net proposal described above. If the Policy Committee does not recommend attempting to close trawling in Green Bay, it would be appropriate to develop a short position statement explaining why not.

## **Burbot**

Background. One commercial fisher has requested that appropriate changes be made to the administrative code to allow the application of burbot catches to the minimum catch requirement for re-licensing.

Action. This will be discussed with legal counsel.